

A message for family members

from Maj. Todd A. Balsimo, HQ Commandant

Everyday I make an effort to spend a little time talking with Soldiers about any subject they wish. I can truly say that every Soldier mentions something about family back home. Family is on our minds. Knowing that we have loved ones back home supporting us gives us the right frame of mind to carry out our mission successfully. You are a very important part of our attitude, our character, our strength, and our courage. For that, I thank all the families for the support they have given to the Soldiers here at Camp Bondsteel. I am equally grateful for the support you have given to other families of Soldiers deployed here as well.

A few days ago we passed the halfway mark of our time here. Looking back, we had many challenges to face. We had to mobilize from Germany to Kosovo. We had to accomplish a relief-in-place with the Task Force we were replacing. We had to put our training to the test and perform new duties and tasks as the riots erupted in March, less than one month after we arrived. We had new responsibilities. We had to come to the realization we were on a real mission affecting real people. We had to provide a safe and secure environment for the people in the province of Kosovo.

Today, I am proud to say that the Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Falcon, have successfully overcome the challenges we faced up to this point. Looking forward, we have most of the same challenges, but some new ones as well. We have to stay on our toes and overcome complacency and not let down our guard on the mission. We have to keep a good, solid, professional attitude. We have to stop thinking about how many days have gone by since we were with our families and start thinking more and more about how we can continue conducting our mission and day-to-day activities safely so we can arrive home strong, healthy, and without injuries. The result of our Soldiers arriving home safely will be the keystone to the overall success of our deployment.

The majority of HHC Soldiers are those who make up the Task Force Headquarters. The remaining group of Soldiers consists of elements that support the Task



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Force Headquarters. These elements include Soldiers from the 641st Postal Detachment (New York), 147th Finance Detachment (Minnesota), 147th Personnel Services Battalion (Minnesota), 34th Engineer Brigade (North Dakota), 134th Signal (Minnesota), 634th Military Intelligence (Minnesota), 34th DISCOM (Minnesota), 75th EOD (Michigan), 1204th Engineers (Alabama), and the United States Air Force. The cohesion between the different HHC elements is amazing. During the March riots, dedication and teamwork prevailed when HHC successfully accomplished 157 successful escort missions in 15 days.

I look forward to our safe return home in late August. Again, thank you for your continued support of your Soldiers in the Task Force. We all appreciate all your efforts and keeping us in your prayers.

MPs keep vacationing Soldiers Safe

By Spc. Sean McCollum

The Fighter Management Pass Program is a chance for Soldiers of Multinational Brigade (East) to take four days of rest and relaxation in Sofia, Bulgaria. To make sure everyone makes it back ready to complete the rest of their deployment, Soldiers from the 192nd Military Police Detachment are on hand to supervise.

From their Tactical Operations Center in the hotel which is the temporary home of the visiting Soldiers, the MPs ensure the safety of the vacationing residents.

"When you first get there you have an inbriefing," said Staff Sgt. Tracey Eitel, a Lincoln, Neb., resident who was the FMPP noncommissioned officer in charge during her rotation. "They tell you what places are off limits."

Eitel said one of the jobs the MPs did during her rotation to keep their fellow Soldiers safe was perform regular patrols of the city's bars and clubs.

"We went on patrols with two Bulgarian police officers and an interpreter," said Spc. Eton Stebbins, an MP from Gothenburg, Neb., who

added the patrols would go into different establishments and talk to the management to figure out how many Soldiers were in the building. "We'd go in, talk to them for a little bit, and make sure everything was all right."

When the nightly patrols of the streets and public areas of the town were complete, Eitel said the MPs were still on the job and would make their way back to the hotel and wait for the Soldiers to return safely to their temporary home.

A rotation as an FMPP MP lasts for up to 45 days, according to Eitel, leaving plenty of time for both work and play.

"We have our downtime to go and do stuff, and usually that's during the day," Eitel said. "You work

two days and then you have one day off, so you have plenty of time to do whatever you want."

After working in Bulgaria for over a month, Eitel can list many activities within a four-mile radius of the hotel as well as out in the countryside, including go-kart tracks and tours of the area.

"There's lots of places to go and see," she said. "They have ten different tours you can go on: historical places, religious places, wine tasting, and all kinds of different ski trips."

Stebbins said he also knows where to go, and that he was looking forward to his next trip to Bulgaria, during his FMPP time.



Spc. Eton Stebbins, left, and Staff Sgt. Tracey Eitel, both with the 192nd Military Police Detachment, pose for a picture in front of the Provost Marshal Office on Camp Bondsteel.

New doctors take over Med Falcon

By Spc. Sean McCollum

The doctors and dentists of Task Force Medical Falcon give up lucrative practices at home to treat the Soldiers of Multinational Brigade (East). As a result, their tours in Kosovo are shortened to approximately three months.

"Most of the physicians that come through here come through Med Falcon and they are on a 90-day rotation policy," said Col. Basil Leblanc, the former task force surgeon for Headquarters and Headquarters Company,

34th Infantry Division, who returned home to Sartell, Minn., in May after four months of deployment. Leblanc returned to two practices: working as a health director for St. Johns University and managing his private practice.

Leblanc said his time spent in Kosovo was worth the time spent away from his work at home.

"This has been a terrific experience for me and I don't think of it so much as leaving here but returning to my other two practices," said Leblanc of his experience in Kosovo. "Many of my partners have been very helpful in covering my practices while I'm gone. However it is time to return and pick up my usual life."

The most recent round of re-



Cpt. Clarissa Couch, a dentist with Task Force Medical Falcon, checks the teeth of a Kosovar boy at a Medical and Civilian Assistance Program mission held in the town of Kishnapole/ Kisno Polje.

placements for Med Falcon doctors arrived in May, and were put to work after just three days on the ground. Capt. Clarissa Couch, a dentist with Med Falcon and a public health dentist in from Chicago, Ill., said she arrived on a Wednesday night and by Saturday she was running a Medical Civilian Assistance Program mission in the village of Kishna Pole/ Kisno Polje. MEDCAP missions are regularly held in various villages and provide supplemental medical and dental care for the rural residents.

"We got here on Wednesday and we went on the MEDCAP that Saturday," said Couch, and added that her experience in the civilian world enabled her to jump this particular hurdle.

"Being a public health dentist,

I'm used to taking my equipment on the road and providing treatment. So from that aspect there was no difference," she said, adding that time she spent in El Salvador during Annual Training helped prepare her for working in an economically poor area.

Couch said she had worked with many of the enlisted members of the dental clinic here before and she was in contact with MNB(E) medical personnel before deploying, and those things, combined with her civilian and military experience, made her transition easier. She said she is optimistic about the rest of her tour.

"Everything's going really well and I hope the remainder of my 90 days continues to be the same," Couch said.



Bullhorn From the Families

Be a part of the Bullhorn

Submit your helpful information, messages to the troops or tips on dealing with deployment to your Family Readiness Group leader or email them to FSGKosovo@bondsteel2.aur.army.mil.

Find helpful answers to your questions

Submitted by LeAnn Fobbs, Michigan

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TRICARE has Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator (BCAC) staff to assist with your questions and problems. BCAC is a Congressionally mandated initiative, implemented by the TRICARE Management Activity to improve customer service, satisfaction, enhance beneficiary education, and help reduce the volume of Congressional inquiries from beneficiaries.

The FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act mandated the establishment of Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator positions, full time at Lead Agent offices and collaterally at Military Treatment Facilities world-wide.

BCACs act as a preventive mechanism for trouble-shooting TRICARE and Military Health System issues and concerns. You may find your closest BCAC by visiting the Web site at:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/beneficiary/beneficiary/BCACdir/BCACview.aspx>



Bullhorn Important Information

Contacting the Red Cross

Members of the National Guard and Reserves, retirees and civilians may access Red Cross services through their local Red Cross chapter. Red Cross chapters are listed in local telephone books and on the American Red Cross Web site at:

<http://www.redcross.org/where/where.html>.

When calling the Red Cross to send an emergency message to a family member, please have ready the

following information which will speed the process of sending your message:

- Service Member's Full Name
- Rank
- Branch of Service
- Social Security Number
- Military Address
- Information about the deployed unit



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